

Message Text

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PAGE 01 BAGHDA 01379 01 OF 02 031926Z
ACTION SS-25

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 SSO-00 /026 W
-----012902 031934Z /44
R 031130Z JUL 78
FM USINT BAGHDAD
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 6414

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 1 OF 2 BAGHDAD 1379

STADIS//////////

EXDIS

FOR NEA/ARN

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PEPR, XF, IZ
SUBJECT: DE BORCHGRAVE INTERVIEW WITH SADDAM HUSSEIN

REF: BAGHDAD 1355

1. RCC VICE CHAIRMAN SADDAM HUSSEIN GAVE TWO-HOUR INTERVIEW TO NEWSWEEK'S ARNAUD DE BORCHGRAVE ON JULY 1. DE BORCHGRAVE HAS PROVIDED US WITH COPY OF FULL TRANSCRIPT, AS WELL AS EDITED VERSION TO BE SUBMITTED TO GOI, WHICH ARE BEING POUCHED TODAY TO NEA/ARN. HE ASKS THAT, IN KEEPING WITH HIS STANDARD POLICY, INFORMATION BE STRICTLY EMBARGOED PENDING PUBLICATION ON OR ABOUT JULY 10.

2. DE BORCHGRAVE SAYS SADDAM DID NOT DISSEMBLE, BUT GAVE FORCEFUL PRESENTATION OF IRAQ'S POSITION ON THE SUBJECTS COVERED, ALLOWING FOR NORMAL TENDENCY TO OCCASIONALLY WANDER FROM SPECIFIC POINT OF QUESTION ASKED. IT WAS EVIDENTLY AN IMPRESSIVE PERFORMANCE BY A RELAXED, CONFIDENT LEADER. ACCORDING
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PAGE 02 BAGHDA 01379 01 OF 02 031926Z

TO TRANSCRIPT, NOT TOO MUCH GROUND WAS BROKEN. MAIN POINTS IN SADDAM'S PRESENTATION ARE AS FOLLOWS.

3. RELATIONS WITH THE SOVIET UNION.

IRAQ SEES THE WORLD THROUGH BI-POLAR GLASSES. IT RECOGNIZES

THE THREAT POSED BY THE SOVIET UNION BUT EQUATES IT WITH ONE FROM THE U.S. THE TWO SIDES HAVE VARIOUS MEANS FOR EXTENDING THEIR CONTROL AND IRAQ FEARS BOTH OF THEM. IN CONTRAST TO COMMENTS MADE TO FRENCH MINDEF BOURGES, AS REPORTED BY FRENCH AMBASSADOR (BAGHDAD 1353), SADDAM SAID RECENT EXECUTIONS WERE A WARNING TO USSR. HE POINTED OUT THAT SINCE THOSE INVOLVED WERE MILITARY MEN THEY WERE EXECUTED BY BEING SHOT, AND NOT HUNG AS REPORTED IN THE PRESS, BUT IT WAS FOR PLOTTING AGAINST THE STATE AND NOT JUST BECAUSE THEY WERE COMMUNISTS. THERE ARE PROBLEMS WITH THE SOVIETS, BUT CRITICISMS OF THE POLICY OF A FRIENDLY COUNTRY SHOULD NOT BE JUDGED IN THE CONTEXT OF A COMING CHANGE IN RELATIONS.

4. LIBERATION MOVEMENTS.

IRAQ IS OPEN AND FREE FOR THE TRAINING AND PLANNING OF PALESTINIAN GROUPS, BUT HAS A CLEAR STAND AGAINST THE USE OF ITS TERRITORIES BY OR FOR EUROPEANS. SOME PALESTINIAN GROUPS MAY BE INVOLVED WITH EUROPEANS OUTSIDE IRAQ, BUT THE GOI IS OPPOSED TO AND IS UNAWARE OF ANY SUCH ACTIVITIES INSIDE THE COUNTRY. IRAQ DOES NOT INTERFERE WITH THE AIMS OR POLICIES OF RESISTENCE GROUPS THAT IT HAS AIDED, EXCEPT TO POINT OUT WHEN THEIR ACTIVITIES, E.G. AIRCRAFT HIJACKINGS, HURT THE CAUSE OR REFLECT BADLY ON IRAQ.
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PAGE 03 BAGHDA 01379 01 OF 02 031926Z

5. ARAB-ISRAELI QUESTION.

IRAQ RECOGNIZES THE PLO AS THE LEGITIMATE REPRESENTATIVE OF THE PALESTINIAN PEOPLE ON THE ROAD TO THE LIBERATION OF PALESTINE, AND NOT TO ANY HALF-WAY HOUSE OF CAPITULATIONIST POLICIES. IT THEREFORE DIFFERS WITH THE PLO AND OTHER MEMBERS OF THE REJECTIONIST FRONT SINCE IT IS OPPOSED TO THE IDEA OF PEACE WITH ISRAEL EVEN WITHIN THE 1967 BORDERS. IRAQ SEES WAR AS THE ONLY SOLUTION TO THE PROBLEM, NOT TODAY OR TOMORROW, BUT IN TIME.
(COMMENT: IN AN EARLIER STATEMENT ANSWERING A QUESTION CONCERNING RELATIONS WITH THE U.S., SADDAM SAID THAT TELLING THE "ZIONIST AGGRESSOR" THAT IT MUST CHANGE ITS POSITION TO NON-AGGRESSION WOULD BE THE SORT OF SHIFT IN U.S. POLICY THAT WOULD BE CONSIDERED MEANINGFUL. THIS IS PROBABLY A MORE ACCURATE REFLECTION OF IRAQ'S POSITION, SINCE SADDAM HAS PREVIOUSLY STATED THAT IF ALL ARAB PARTIES WERE SATISFIED WITH A SETTLEMENT IRAQ WOULD GO ALONG. IT MAY BE THAT HE HAS TAKEN THE NEWSWEEK PODIUM AS THE PROPER PLACE FOR A MORE HOSTILE AND RIGID PUBLIC STANCE. END COMMENT)

6. SOVIET OVERFLIGHTS.

THE GOI WAS OPPOSED TO SOVIET AIRPLANES GOING TO ETHIOPIA
VIA IRAQ AND THEREFORE OBTAINED A FIRM COMMITMENT
THAT THEY WOULD GO ONLY AS FAR AS ADEN. IRAQ ASSUMED THAT
SOME OF THE SHIPMENTS WOULD GO ON TO ETHIOPIA BY
OTHER MEANS, BUT SINCE THE USSR AND ETHIOPIA ARE BOTH
COUNTRIES WITH WHICH IRAQ HAS FRIENDLY RELATIONS, NOTHING
COULD BE DONE ABOUT THAT.

7. GULF SECURITY.

IRAQ IS PLEASED THAT IRAN HAS PUBLICLY ABANDONED ITS
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PAGE 04 BAGHDA 01379 01 OF 02 031926Z

EFFORTS TO WORK OUT A MUTUAL DEFENSE ARRANGEMENT WITH
ITS GULF NEIGHBORS. WHAT IS NEEDED IS NORMAL BILATERAL
RELATIONS IN THE CONTEXT OF FREEDOM OF NAVIGATION, INTERNAL
RESOLUTION OF PROBLEMS AND NO OUTSIDE (READ FOREIGN)
INTERFERENCE. IRAQ WILL NOT HESITATE TO INTERVENE
AGAIN IN DHOFAR OR ELSEWHERE IF IRAN OR ANYONE ELSE DOES.

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PAGE 01 BAGHDA 01379 02 OF 02 031923Z
ACTION SS-25

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 SSO-00 /026 W
-----012845 031934Z /44

R 031130Z JUL 78
FM USINT BAGHDAD
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 6415

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 2 OF 2 BAGHDAD 1379

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FOR NEA/ARN

8. ARMS DIVERSIFICATION.

IRAQ SEEKS TO ADVANCE ITS OWN NATIONAL INTERESTS AND THOSE OF THE ARAB NATION. IRAQ WANTS A STRONG ARMY CAPABLE OF DEFENDING ITS SOVEREIGNTY, GUARANTEEING ITS INDEPENDENCE AND PARTICIPATING IN THE ARAB NATION'S BATTLES. WHEN A CERTAIN TYPE OF WEAPON IS NEEDED, IT IS OBTAINED REGARDLESS OF THE SOURCE. THIS DOES NOT MEAN A CHANGE IN POLICY OR IN RELATIONS WITH OTHER STATES.

9. RELATIONS WITH CUBA.

IRAQ FINDS THE CUBAN POSITION DIFFICULT TO UNDERSTAND, SO IT IS HARD TO PREDICT THEIR INVOLVEMENT IN RHODESIA AND NAMIBIA. THEY DO SAY, HOWEVER, THAT THEY WILL NOT SEND TROOPS UNLESS INVITED BY THE GOVERNMENTS OF THOSE COUNTRIES. THEY WILL NOT HELP THE ETHIOPIANS AGAINST ERITREANS UNLESS A FOREIGN POWER INTERVENES ON ERITREA'S SIDE.

10. RELATIONS WITH THE U.S.
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PAGE 02 BAGHDA 01379 02 OF 02 031923Z

IRAQ HAS NOT NOTICED ANY AMERICAN ATTEMPTS TO INTERFERE DIRECTLY IN ITS AFFAIRS IN THE LAST THREE YEARS. THERE IS AN ANTI-IRAQ POLICY, HOWEVER, SINCE THE U.S. SPEAKS OF IRAQ AS SOVIET SATELLITE AND TALKS OF SECRET SOVIET BASES HERE. THE CONTINUED AND GROWING AMERICAN SUPPORT FOR ISRAELI, AS WELL AS EFFORTS TO DIVIDE THE ARAB WORLD, STAND IN THE WAY OF DIPLOMATIC RELATIONS. SO FAR, WORDS RATHER THAN DEEDS ARE ALL THAT REFLECT ANY SHIFT IN U.S. POLICY TOWARD THE MIDDLE EAST, EVEN THOUGH SOME ARAB COUNTRIES ARE SUPPORTING AMERICA'S AIMS. "THE LACK OF NORMAL RELATIONS WITH THE U.S. IS, HOPEFULLY, A TEMPORARY CASE, NO MATTER HOW LONG IT MAY LAST."

11. COMMENT: THERE ARE UNDERSTANDABLE DIFFERENCES BETWEEN SPEAKING PRIVATELY AND FOR PUBLICATION, AND SADDAM HAS PREDICTABLY TAKEN A SOMEWHAT HARDER STANCE IN HIS NEWSWEEK INTERVIEW THAN HE HAS IN REPORTED CONVERSATIONS WITH VISITING DIGNITARIES. THE BASIC THRUST IS MUCH THE SAME, BUT THE OVERTONES ARE DIFFERENT. IT WOULD BE INTERESTING TO KNOW WHICH PARTS, IF ANY, ARE DELETED BY THE IRAQIS (AS OPPOSED TO NEWSWEEK'S EDITORS) FROM THE TEXT SUBMITTED FOR PUBLICATION. WE WILL NOT BE ABLE TO FIND OUT AT THIS END, SINCE DE BORCHGRAVE LEAVES IMMEDIATELY AFTER THE FINAL MEETING ON THE SUBJECT.
PECK

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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: Z
Capture Date: 01 jan 1994
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: FOREIGN RELATIONS, PRESS CONFERENCES, LIBERATION FRONTS
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 03 jul 1978
Decaption Date: 20 Mar 2014
Decaption Note: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 20 Mar 2014
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1978BAGHDA01379
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: GS
Errors: N/A
Expiration:
Film Number: D780274-0537
Format: TEL
From: BAGHDAD
Handling Restrictions:
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1978/newtext/t197807101/aaaadhir.tel
Line Count: 224
Litigation Code IDs:
Litigation Codes:
Litigation History:
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Message ID: 784cc06a-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Office: ACTION SS
Original Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Original Handling Restrictions: EXDIS, STADIS
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 5
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Previous Handling Restrictions: EXDIS, STADIS
Reference: 78 BAGHDAD 1355
Retention: 0
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 17 jun 2005
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review Media Identifier:
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
SAS ID: 1850325
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: DE BORCHGRAVE INTERVIEW WITH SADDAM HUSSEIN
TAGS: PEPR, SOPN, XF, IZ, UR, PLO, (HUSSEIN, SADDAM)
To: STATE
Type: TE
vdkgvwkey: odbc://SAS/SAS.dbo.SAS_Docs/784cc06a-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Review Markings:
Sheryl P. Walter
Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
20 Mar 2014
Markings: Sheryl P. Walter Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 20 Mar 2014